

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY	USSR (Taymyr National Okrug)	REPORT		25X1
SUBJECT	Forced Labor Camp Strike in Norilsk	DATE DISTR.	28 April 1955	25X1
		NO. OF PAGES	2	25X1
DATE OF INFO.		REQUIREMENT		25X1
PLACE ACQUIRED		REFERENCES		
DATE ACQUIRED		This is UNEVALUATED Information		

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1. The death of Stalin brought about a psychological change among the people, who began to have hope. They talked more freely and even thought of rising against the authorities, as was shown by the strike in Norilsk. The strike broke out on 28 May 1953 and lasted two weeks. It was said that it had been organized by newcomers among the political prisoners from the western Ukraine, who had sentences of 25 years. The main cause of the strike was the harsh regime imposed on the prisoners since 1952; they were mistreated without any legal basis. The immediate pretext for the strike was the killing of four prisoners who were in a convoy being escorted to work. Some 48,000 prisoners, that is all politicals under Gorlag, participated in the strike. The work in the factories had to be interrupted because of the coal shortage.
2. On the fourth day of the strike, a commission arrived from Krasnoyarsk. One member of the commission was General Aleksandr Panyukov of the MVD, who was a member of the Supreme Soviet. The strikers refused to accept the commission as arbitrators and insisted on a Moscow delegation. The Moscow commission, composed of four people, arrived by plane and settled the strike. In each camp, four delegates were chosen by the prisoners to negotiate with the commission.
3. The commission agreed to the following improvements in the camp situation:

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STATE	X	ARMY	X	NAVY	X	AIR	X	FBI		AEC						
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- a. The doors of the barracks would no longer be locked during the night. They had previously been closed from 2200 to 0500.
 - b. Political prisoners would no longer wear a number on their backs and on the knees of their pants.
 - c. Work shifts would be reduced from 10 to nine hours.
 - d. Prisoners returning from work would no longer be searched at the entrance of their camps. Before the strike, prisoners worked until 1900, arrived at their camps about 2000, and then would be delayed by the search for as much as an hour and a half, until 2130. Frequently, the search detained them so long that they received no dinner.
 - e. Prisoners would have permission to write letters once a month, instead of two letters per year.
 - f. Prisoners would be allowed to draw up to 480 rubles from their account if they had earned enough or received money from home. Previously, the maximum had been 200 rubles.
 - g. Sick prisoners and invalids would be sent to better climates, if necessary. Since 1948, it had been forbidden to send sick prisoners to the "mainland" (materik). (In Norilsk, considered as a peninsula, one always talked of going to the "mainland" or "continent" and of goods coming from the mainland.) A common expression in Norilsk, considered to be located on a peninsula.
 - h. Political prisoners would be entitled to a work discount (zaschet) from which they had been excluded. The work discount meant that for overfulfilling the norm 110 to 150 percent, one to three days could be deducted from the sentence.
5. The government commission turned down the prisoners' request that the amnesty granted to criminals should be extended to political prisoners. The bars were removed from the barracks windows, and [redacted] the other promises were also kept.

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